



## City of Asheville Continues Emphasis on Safety and Cleanliness Downtown

The City of Asheville's Downtown Safety Initiative to develop a sustainable approach to addressing community safety and cleanliness issues will transition from a pilot initiative to an ongoing effort on July 1, 2023. During the 60-day pilot period, City staff continued standard operations while also tracking and testing actions that had potential to improve safety and cleanliness downtown.

The focused effort, which was based on the premise that public safety and cleanliness is a community-wide responsibility, made considerable headway in understanding and addressing public safety conditions and cleanliness issues in downtown.

Within these 60 days, our collective efforts resulted in the following:

- Implemented a new Community Responder Pilot program, led by AFD, resulting in 327 proactive interactions since the service launched on May 1 through June 25, 2023.
- The Community Responder effort supported 146 wellness checks and 12 first aid/wound care needs being addressed, as well as qualitative and quantitative data on resource needs.
- APD officers logged 723 foot patrol hours, 41 bike patrol hours and carried out 429 verbal warnings.
- APD also made 858 business contacts between May 1 and June 25, 2023, promoting loss-prevention strategies and sharing steps businesses can take to reduce crime.
- Cross-departmental staff conducted safety assessment walks with 23 business and community representatives, identifying 79 issues/opportunities for improvements.
- 7 volunteer clean-up events took place totaling 108 person hours with 415 lbs of trash removed.
- Public Works staff removed 4,347 graffiti tags between May 1 and June 25, 2023.
- Additional results and actions taken from May 1 - June 25, 2023 are [viewable here](#).

### What we learned:

- Proactive engagement and presence by law enforcement and supportive services continues to be needed in order to address the complicated factors contributing to public safety within downtown and across the city.

- During this concentrated effort, there were not significant crime spikes in other areas of the city.
- Unfortunately, violent crime remains high citywide.
- Community support and engagement is needed to interrupt patterns of violence and reduce crime citywide.
- What we heard from the community:
  - Generally, feedback from the community about efforts taken during the initiative has been positive
  - Proactive public and community safety presence is important
  - The cross-disciplinary approach has had positive impacts, particularly on cleanliness conditions
  - The opportunity for community members to work with interdepartmental staff to review conditions on-site is valuable
  - Additional guidance about how businesses can contribute to a safer environment would be beneficial, including adding lighting, linking security cameras into the County-wide system and clarifying responsibilities for cleanliness
  - Clearer, more unified guidance across agencies on reporting issues, especially related to support for the unhoused, is needed
  - Survey results from a follow up survey administered by the Asheville Downtown Association are [viewable here](#)

## **Services that will be continued:**

- **Asheville Police Department Proactive Presence**
  - An increased police presence downtown will remain a priority for APD
- **Extension of the Community Responder Pilot Program**
  - Community safety presence and proactive assistance to individuals in need by AFD will continue as a permanent service in downtown and beyond downtown ([view the dashboard here](#))
- **Prioritization of Lighting Improvements**
  - Weekly monitoring of street light outages
  - Improved systems for tracking needed repairs
- **Proactive Noise and Zoning Enforcement**
  - Education and outreach on issues related to noise, signage, construction sites, and other public space concerns downtown
- **Commitment to Addressing Homelessness**
  - Funding outreach services through Homeward Bound to assist people experiencing homelessness as well as community members/businesses
  - Implementation of recommendations from the National Alliance to End Homelessness to restructure leadership/governance, enhance outreach, improve encampment response, add shelter capacity and improve access to services
- **Enhanced City Parking Garage Safety and Cleanliness**
  - Monthly pressure washing of stairwells

- Increased frequency of city parking garage patrols with new cameras installed in the garages and contracted security services being initiated
- **Downtown Cleanliness**
  - Trash and recycling collection 7 days per week
  - Biohazard cleaning services in public spaces and parking garages through new on-call contracted services
  - 9 full-time staff devoted to downtown cleanliness including graffiti abatement, vegetation control, 4 times per week street sweeping, code compliance and general clean-up
  - Contracted downtown cleanliness services including litter pick-up and vegetation control 5 days per week along with sidewalk pressure-washing 6 times per year
  - Improved response to hot spots and cleanliness issues city-wide on an as-needed basis
- **Maintenance and Management of Parks**
  - Downtown parks security coverage 7 days/week with additional evening coverage during the summer season (2:00 p.m. - 10:30 p.m.)
  - On-going contracted maintenance for horticulture at Pack Square and new contracted services for maintenance at Pritchard Park and other downtown public spaces
- **Improved Coordination and Follow-Up**
  - A new Constituent Services Manager in the City Manager's Office will provide improved response to community requests, including coordination of interdepartmental resources and communication

Activities and actions taken during the 60-day period are viewable on the [safety initiative project page here](#).